

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6770

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 1492

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, UR, IC, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET INTERESTS IN ICELAND

REF: STATE 271761

1. DURING COURTESY CALL BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR FARAFONOV ON ME NOVEMBER 10 (SEPTTEL), I ASKED HIM ABOUT LEVEL OF SOVIET INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES HERE. (I UNDERSTAND HEAD COUNT AT SOVIET EMBASSY IS 67). FARAFONOV NOTED CURRENT PRESENCE IN REYKJAVIK OF ARMENIAN CULTURAL GROUP AND THAT HE HAD ARRANGED FOR IT TO CALL ON PRESIDENT ELDJARN. FROM TIME TO TIME, SOVIET EMBASSY ENDEAVORS TO PLACE INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL WITH LOCAL PRESS BUT, ACCORDING TO HIM, WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS. FARAFONOV SAID TRADE BETWEEN USSR AND ICELAND IS LIMITED TO EXCHANGE OF SOVIET OIL FOR ICELANDIC FISH, FISH PRODUCTS AND ICELANDIC WOOL PRODUCTS, BUT PROBLEM EXISTS IN THAT ICELAND DOES NOT HAVE VERY MUCH TO SELL. (ACTUALLY, AS OF OCTOBER 1976, SOVIET BALANCE AGAINST ICELAND WAS \$36 MILLION. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY GUNNAR THORODDSEN TOLD ME THIS MORNING THAT SOVIETS HAD TRIED IN

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PAST TO GET ICELAND TO BUY SOVIET MOTOR VEHICLES

AND MACHINERY IN CONTEXT OF EXISTING BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, BUT GOI HAD TURNED THEM DOWN.) WHEN I TOLD AMBASSADOR I HAD SEEN VERY ATTRACTIVE SOVIET MONTHLY MAGAZINE PRINTED IN ICELANDIC, HE DISMISSED ITS IMPORTANCE SAYING THAT CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO ITS DISCONTINUANCE BECAUSE OF ITS COST AND LIMITED CIRCULATION. WHEN I ASKED, HE TOLD ME THAT THE PUBLICATION, QUOTE NEWS FROM THE SOVIET UNION UNQUOTE, IS MAILED TO ANYONE WHO REQUESTS IT.

2. FOLLOWING DAY, SOVIET PRESS OFFICER, VITOR V. ELISEYEV, FIRST SECRETARY, CALLED ON NEWLY-ARRIVED PAO RANTANEN AFTER FIRST REQUESTING APPOINTMENT. ELISEYEV EXPRESSED HOPE FOR FUTURE COOPERATION BETWEEN US AND SOVIET UNION UNDER NEW ADMINISTRATION. PAO ADHERED TO LINE SET FORTH REFTEL. IN RESPONSE TO PAO'S QUERIES, ELISEYEV WHO HAS FIRST SECRETARY RANK, SAID REYKJAVIK WAS HIS FIRST DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENT. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN A QUOTE DESIGN ENGINEER UNQUOTE UNTIL 1971 WHEN HE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE.

3. ELISEYEV, WHO SPOKE FAIR ENGLISH AND SWEDISH, SAID AN ICELANDIC INSTRUCTOR WAS TEACHING ICELANDIC AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO STAFFERS. (THIS CONFIRMS INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE UPGRADING LANGUAGE SKILLS OF THEIR OFFICERS WHO ARE CARRYING OUT INCREASED PERSONAL CONTACTS AND APPEARING AT MORE PUBLIC FUNCTIONS). ELISEYEV EXPRESSED INTEREST IN RECEIVING INVITATIONS TO SOME USIS SHOWINGS AND OFFERED TO MAKE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PAO TO VIEW ANY OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY'S QUOTE LARGE STOCK OF FILMS UNQUOTE. HE ALSO SAID PAO WOULD BE INVITED TO CERTAIN EMBASSY FUNCTIONS. IN SHORT, ELISEYEV APPEARED ANXIOUS TO MAKE AND MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH PAO.
BLAKE

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